

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, December 12, 2007

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COULD YOU HAVE SAVED RICKY?

Chapter 11: Bad news for Tim

December 12, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Eleventh of 14 parts

The break that triggered the collapse of Tim and Lisa Holland's house of cards came in a letter on Jan. 20, 2006.

Advertisement

The Army was firing Tim. Not only was Tim's professional life disintegrating, his marriage was about to blow up as well. His job loss became the tipping point in the investigation of Ricky's death.

In the three months since police had searched Tim's office in Troy, investigators had found more than 2,000 pornographic images on his government laptop. He'd been fighting to get back his security clearance and keep his civilian job with the Army's 902nd Military Intelligence Group. He'd even given a 2-page statement to his superiors blaming Lisa for his use of the laptop to surf adult-oriented Web sites.

"I discovered my wife had been visiting Internet Web sites pertaining to meeting other adults for the purpose of sex," Holland wrote Dec. 14. He said he tracked Lisa with the laptop and joined the same Web sites. He denied ever following through with liaisons.

"I know that my actions using the laptop to search for and view pornography is against regulations. I know I made a mistake, but I never let it interfere with the performance of my duties," Tim wrote.

'I can't afford to lose my job'

On Dec. 15, a desperate-sounding Tim e-mailed the unit's legal counsel in Michigan, asking for a chance to speak to the 902nd's commander, Col. Gregg C. Potter.

"I can't afford to lose my job at this point in time," the e-mail said. "My son is missing and without any source of income, I will have no hopes of finding him on my own. I will take a reduction in grade, suspension without pay, seek counseling, pay for additional training, or whatever Col. Potter wants me to do. All I ask is that Col. Potter not punish my family for my error in judgment."

On Jan. 20, John Barnett, special agent in charge of the 902nd's Detroit office, handed Tim a letter:

"This serves as notice that I am proposing your removal from your position ... based on violations of Army Regulations, including misuse of government property and a security violation. ...

"You placed yourself, and therefore the security of sensitive Army activities, in jeopardy. Integrity and judgment are essential to the accomplishment of our mission. Your conduct represents a complete failure in this regard."

Tim had 10 days to respond.

He came home from work with a packet containing his dismissal letter and told Lisa to stay out of it. He admitted losing his job but said it happened because the Army wouldn't give back his security clearance.

Three days later, Lisa opened the packet and found his memo accusing her -- falsely, she would say later -- of surfing porn sites and finding sex partners online. The two argued, and Tim claimed that Lisa backhanded him, cutting his face with a ring.

More suspicions from school

The next morning, Nancy Deal, Trevor's preschool teacher at Discovery Elementary School in Williamston, called State Police Sgt. Frank Mraz and Child Protective Services to make her third report of suspected abuse of Ricky's brother, now 4.

Deal said Trevor had large scratches on the back of his neck and back and had told her "Mommy did it."

Mraz, Ingham County Sheriff's Detective Paul Nieuwsma, Child Protective Services investigator Kathleen Daugherty and Ingham Department of Human Services supervisor Gail Cacciani went to the school the next day.

Deal kept saying that she knew "in my heart" that the Hollands had killed Ricky and she couldn't understand why CPS had not removed the other four children. She was increasingly concerned about Trevor, who was developmentally delayed and had trouble articulating.

The CPS investigators and Mraz differ on what transpired when they tried to interview the boy. To Daugherty, his answers made little sense. When asked his age, Trevor said, "Big." When the question was repeated, he said, "Thirty-three," and held up three fingers twice. But Mraz thought the boy was able to answer "baseline questions" and indicated that his mother had hit him.

Mraz, trying to build a criminal case, saw an opportunity to increase the pressure on Tim. The detective asked Daugherty to hold off talking with Lisa and contact Tim first.

Daugherty called Tim that afternoon to let him know that she'd interviewed his son. Was this about the scratches? Tim asked. He said he'd already talked with Lisa and she told him Trevor came home that way from school.

But Tim said he didn't believe Trevor's teacher had scratched him. He agreed to take the boy to Dr. Stephen Guertin at Sparrow Hospital's Regional Children's Center. An appointment was made for Jan. 27, two days away.

Tim files complaint against Lisa

After leaving Trevor's school, Mraz also called Tim and asked him to come to the State Police post in Lansing to talk about the boy. Tim arrived about 5 p.m. after dropping the other kids at his sister's in DeWitt; Lisa was away, visiting her parents in Williamston.

Tim signed a form acknowledging his right to remain silent, then told Mraz and Nieuwsma that he saw the scratches on Trevor's neck that morning. Tim said first the boy blamed the teacher, then Tim. Finally, Trevor had said, "Mommy did it."

But Tim said Lisa denied knowing anything about the scratches and insisted they happened at school.

Tim said he never saw Lisa abuse the children, but as they talked, his façade began to crack.

At one point, Nieuwsma asked about the cut below Tim's left eye and was told Lisa had hit him during an argument.

Had it ever happened before?

Tim acknowledged past incidents and said his life had been hell for the eight years of his marriage. Lisa had cut up his

shirts, chased him with scissors and, recently, thrown a plugged-in hair dryer into the shower in an apparent attempt to electrocute him. His wife was controlling and jealous, he said. She often talked about leaving, he said, and was "so frustrated with her children that she has threatened to return the adopted children back to the state."

After agreeing to file a domestic violence complaint, Tim was sent home.

Lisa Holland is jailed

At 8:45 p.m., when sheriff's deputies arrived at the home of Lisa's parents to arrest her, she was talking to Tim on the phone. Deputies ordered her to hang up, then handcuffed her and put her into the patrol car. During the ride to the sheriff's department in Mason, Lisa repeatedly asked why she was under arrest. She was told the detectives would let her know.

By the time Lisa was read her rights and agreed to talk, it was close to 10 p.m. She admitted having a disagreement with Tim over his firing but said there was no physical violence. She admitted cutting up his shirt once, but emphatically denied throwing a hair dryer into the shower.

Lisa was locked up for the night, pending her arraignment on an assault charge the next day.

The next morning, Lisa sent a message to her jailers, saying she wanted to talk with a detective. Tim left a voice mail for Daugherty that day, saying his sister would take Trevor to the doctor the next day because Tim would be meeting with police.

Finally, investigators were close to getting some answers.

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com.

FRIDAY: He said, she said.

Chapter 10: The office search

Chapter 12: He said, she said

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DETROIT

Dad joins mom in being charged in daughter's death

December 12, 2007

BY BEN SCHMITT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A father who twice relinquished custody of his 2-year-old daughter to her mother after her parental rights had been terminated was charged Tuesday in the girl's death.

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy announced that Warren Williams Jr., 40, of Detroit was charged with involuntary manslaughter. Williams had sole custody of the 2-year-old, Carila.

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In September, Carila was treated for burns at a hospital after being in the custody of her mother, prosecutors said.

Two months later, Carila was pronounced dead on arrival at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit with skull fractures, facial injuries and a broken clavicle.

The child's mother, Nicole Holloway, 32, is charged with felony murder in the Nov. 3 death. Holloway, whom Worthy said has a substance abuse problem, is accused of beating her daughter to death at the Packard Motel on East Grand Boulevard in Detroit.

Worthy said Williams knew that Holloway was not to have physical contact with the girl.

"Mr. Williams was responsible for this child," Worthy said.

If convicted, he could face up to 15 years in prison.

Worthy said the child, born in July 2005, had already suffered extensive abuse at the hands of Holloway when the state terminated her parental rights on Dec. 7, 2005.

Wayne County Child Protective Services also investigated the burning incident but hasn't completed its investigation, Worthy said. Maureen Sorbet, Michigan Department of Human Services spokeswoman, declined to comment on the case.

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Father denies suffocating girl

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

By Danielle Quisenberry

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In taped interviews played Tuesday at his murder trial, Paul Brower admitted to police he struck his daughter several times the last day she was seen alive.

But he did not kill her, he told police repeatedly during two lengthy interviews.

"I was upset. It was a long day," Brower, 26, told Jackson police Detective Sergio Garcia on July 25, the day 3-year-old Victoria Brower was found dead in her bed.

"I said, 'I've had it, Victoria' ... I smacked her on the head. I smacked her on the cheek."

Brower is charged with first-degree murder, felony murder and first-degree child abuse.

"There is no way in hell I suffocated my daughter," Brower told Garcia during an interview July 26 at the Jackson County Jail.

"I am not going to tell you I killed her, because I didn't."

Prosecutors allege Brower was angry and strangled Victoria to death because she wet her pants and damaged the drywall in their Biddle Street home.

A medical examiner testified she died of "asphyxia by suffocation."

She was found dead in her bed on July 25, a day after Brower took her to Menards to teach her a lesson about making holes in the wall.

"He had to pay \$18 to repair it," Garcia testified.

Officer Gary Grant said Brower met him in front of his house at 5:22 a.m. July 25, 11 minutes after he said he found Victoria stiff and cold.

"He was crying, but I noticed there were no tears coming out of his eyes," Grant testified.

Grant took pictures of the dead child, and of her stepmother, Trina Brower, who is a key witness against her husband. Trina Brower had a red mark on her upper cheek where, she claimed, Paul Brower struck her while they slept early July 25, Grant said.

Paul Brower told police he did not remember striking his wife.

He said Trina Brower frequently lied.

Jangie Marr, the stepmother of Trina Brower's young son, testified she had a reputation for being dishonest.

In the second interview, Paul Brower told Garcia he was suspicious of Trina Brower.

“My wife was up a long time after I was up (the date the girl was found dead). I am starting to wonder about her,” he said.

“She has always been jealous of Victoria.”

Police told Brower during the interviews that his wife's version of the events made more sense.

He told police different stories. At first, he said he only spanked Victoria. The marks found on her face, he said initially, were from a fall on the carpet.

“Paul, there are a lot of inconsistencies,” Garcia said during one of the interviews.

After he hit Victoria, he said he felt bad about it. Later in the night, he read her a story, they played a game and he tucked her into bed. “I loved her with all my heart,” said Brower, who had full custody of the girl.

He told police Victoria's mother, Jessica Jewell, who lost custody in a default judgment, chose drugs and partying over her daughter.

Jewell, who sat in the courtroom Tuesday, said what he says is not true. Brower “is a liar,” she said in an interview.

“Every single thing is wrong and incomplete.”

The trial was to continue today before Jackson County Circuit Judge John McBain. The defense had yet to present its case.

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Adoptions create 4 new families

By Jil Schult, Staff Writer

GAYLORD — Five area children received a gift of love this holiday season when four families opened their hearts and homes through adoption.

Michigan Adoption Day on Nov. 20 was designed to raise awareness of the many children who are still waiting for adoption.

"It's an awesome experience and every year it gets bigger and bigger," said Julie Chudzinski, Otsego County probate register. "Our court feels privileged to take part in this event each year."

Jay and Kathryn Saph were looking into adoption when they met 4-year-old Demarco Jay (Saph).

"His biological mom came to our church and his foster parents came to our church," said Kathryn Saph. "We always wanted to adopt."

Demarco visited the Saph home beginning in late October 2006. They began the adoption process in December 2006 and by June, the Saph family had full custody of the preschooler.

"This was our first Thanksgiving with him," Kathryn Saph added. "Having holidays with kids makes holidays more fun and exciting. He's a gift from God, that's for sure."

Gary and Dorothy Wilson have had guardianship of their grandson, 10-year-old Jacob David Staub Wilson, since he was 4 years old.

For the Wilsons, Michigan Adoption Day was a formality. In their minds, Jacob has been their son for six years.

"He's a good kid," said Dorothy Wilson. "A typical boy."

Wilson can't imagine anyone else raising her grandson.

"I wouldn't have it any other way," she said of the adoption. "You take care of your own."

The Wilsons moved from Gaylord to Grandville in October.

Megan Skyler Caddell, 4, and Ashley Nicole Caddell, 6, joined the home of David and Tammie Caddell, who already had four children.

"I have a 23-, 21-, 16-, 11-year-old and now 6 and 4," said Tammie Caddell. "I go to four schools every day."

Her older children help with the younger ones.



Demarco Jay Saph, 4, sits on the lap of his mom, Kathryn Saph, and next to his dad, Jay Saph, on Michigan Adoption Day. (HT - Bill Serveny)

"They're just awesome," said Caddell. "I don't know what I'd do without them.

"It's doable to get a child out of foster care," she added.

"It's the best thing in the whole world that's ever happened to me," said Jessica Lee Hill of the adoption of 4-year-old Kurtis Dillon Hill.

Kurtis has lived with Hill for the past three years.

"It's a great Christmas present," said Hill. "My dreams came true — he made my family complete."

Hill is thankful for the help from Rick Marshall, Department of Human Services (DHS) adoption specialist. He helped to finalize all five adoptions.

"All four families were a pleasure and honor to work with," said Marshall.

"I recommended that all five of the adoptions take place without reservation — with great confidence and optimism that they would serve the best long-time interest of each of those children and their entire families," Marshall added.

Working with adoption for the past 26 years, Marshall covers cases in Otsego, Crawford, Montmorency and Oscoda counties.

In Otsego County, Probate Judge Michael Cooper participated in Michigan Adoption Day.

According to Marshall, they're always looking for potential adoptive families.

— Contact Jil Schult at 748-4518 or jil@gaylordheraldtimes.com.



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Custody may be linked to killing of woman

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

BY REX HALL JR.

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388-7784

PULLMAN -- Investigators believe the death of a 19-year-old woman Tuesday at a house in Allegan County's Casco Township may have been linked to an ongoing child-custody issue, police said.

Lindsey L. Knight, of Hartford, was found dead in a front bedroom of the house in the 200 block of 60th Street after a barricaded gunman who shot a Michigan State Police trooper surrendered some time after 9 a.m., Detective Lt. John Slenk said.

The suspected gunman, a 34-year-old Casco Township man whose name has not been released, was being held this morning in the Allegan County Jail, pending a review of the case by the Allegan County Prosecutor's Office, Lt. Dave Greydanus said.

Detective Sgt. Matthew Doan said police plan to seek several charges against the man, including open murder, attempted murder, kidnapping and felony use of a firearm.

Police have said Knight's death is being investigated as a homicide, however Doan declined to say this morning how she died.

Knight and the suspected gunman were involved in and "on and off" relationship as boyfriend and girlfriend and had two young children together, Doan said. He said authorities are investigating possible motives for the slaying, but believe it may have stemmed from issues pertaining to custody of their children.

Doan said the suspected shooter lived at the 60th Street house and that Knight had lived there in the past, but not as of Tuesday. No children were found in the home when police arrived and investigators plan to interview family members as part of their probe into the case, authorities said.

The discovery of the woman's body came at the end of a standoff that began after two troopers from the State Police post in South Haven, a Bangor police officer and an Allegan County sheriff's deputy went to the house at about 2:30 a.m. on a report that a woman and children were being held against their will, Greydanus said.

Doan said police were contacted by Knight's family, who feared for her safety. He said Knight had called her family and reported that the suspect would not let her come home.

When Knight's family spoke to the suspect, he would not let them speak to Knight, he said.

"At this time, we believe she was being held against her will at the house," said Doan.

Police were greeted at the door by a man they arrested on an outstanding warrant. During a check of the residence, police came upon a front bedroom of the house, Doan said.

When they attempted to enter the room they were met by gunfire, he said. One of the troopers was wounded in the hand.

Doan said police were never able to speak with Knight during the standoff and authorities believe she was killed prior to the first officers arriving on scene.

Police have not released the injured trooper's name, but they did say Tuesday afternoon that he was undergoing surgery at Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo and that his injuries were not considered life-threatening.

Doan said police recovered a shotgun believed to be the weapon that was fired at police.

Gazette News Service

contributed to this report.

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Kalamazoo Gazette

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Finds it ridiculous to receive check for \$1.57

I find it amazing, that with our state in a financial crisis, I receive child support checks from Ingham County Friend of the Court in the amount of \$1.57.

I cannot cash the checks because they charge a \$3 fee, not to mention the cost of the paper the checks are printed on and the postage it takes to send them out.

Why can't they ``save" them up and mail them out when it is more cost effective? Who else do they send out these ridiculous check amounts to? Maybe someone should look into this. It might save the state some money in the long run!

Jennifer Zanger
Kalamazoo



Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Boy, 13, faces charges in high-speed chase

Candice Williams / The Detroit News

A 13-year-old middle school student from Lansing could be charged today on claims he stole a teacher's SUV after school Monday and led police on a high-speed chase at speeds of up to 100 mph that ended with a crash in Livingston County.

Prosecutors from Livingston and Ingham counties are expected to charge the teen, whose name is not being released because he is a juvenile, with fleeing and eluding and driving a stolen vehicle. A police report will be submitted today to the Ingham County prosecutor, said Sgt. Daniel Sump of the Ingham County Parks Police.

According to police, sometime after 5 p.m. the student at Dwight Rich Middle School reportedly took the keys from a teacher's coat, headed outside and drove off in a green 2005 Chevy Tahoe. The teacher reported the car stolen to the Lansing police.

Police are unsure how the boy made his way to Interstate 96, but Ingham County investigators spotted him on the freeway and attempted to stop him as he drove at speeds between 80-100 mph.

"Stop sticks were put out by the deputy and the individual went around (them)," Sump said.

As the teen crossed the county border around 6 p.m., Livingston County deputies began to pursue the vehicle.

"It's not too often we see 13-year-olds stealing cars and getting in high-speed chases," said Livingston County Sheriff Bob Bezotte.

About 6:12 p.m., just after crossing into Howell Township from Fowlerville, the car struck an abandoned vehicle on the shoulder of the freeway and another vehicle also traveling eastbound. The vehicle rolled several times before crashing. All three ended up on the south side of the freeway in a grassy area.

The teen was airlifted to Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor, where he was listed in good condition Tuesday, said hospital officials.

The driver and passenger of the third vehicle were uninjured.

"We're fortunate that no one was waiting for roadside assistance, because they would be been seriously injured and killed," Bezotte said.

Stephen Serkaian, a spokesperson for Lansing Schools, refused to comment on the incident, but said the district hopes the boy will recover.

"(The family is) obviously dealing with a traumatic situation," he said.

You can reach Candice Williams at (517) 552-5504 or cwilliams@detnews.com.

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Police arrest suspect in domestic violence

POLICE BLOTTER

BURTON

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Journal Staff Writer

A Burton man, 62, was held in Flint overnight after a confusing suspected domestic violence situation around his home on Whittemore Street near Pringle Street.

Police believed the man was armed and barricaded in his house Tuesday night. They surrounded the house and were trying to convince him to surrender - then discovered he was talking on his cellphone from a location on Flint's east side, having slipped out a back door before police arrived.

The situation began about 7:30 p.m. when witnesses saw a pickup driving erratically near Belsay and Davison roads with a woman hanging out of the open passenger door.

"It appears he attempted to throw his live-in girlfriend out of his moving truck during an argument," said Burton Detective Brian Moffit. "A car full of people behind them saw her hanging out the car door as he swerved and drove at a high speed."

The witnesses followed the truck to the Whittemore Street home and blocked it in. The man ran inside the house, threatening to get a gun. The witnesses fled across the street with the woman from the vehicle and called police.

Police from the Burton Officer Safety Team surrounded the house, and a negotiator contacted the man on his cellphone, believing him to be barricaded inside and refusing to come out.

The state police Emergency Support Team was on its way home when the Burton officers discovered the man was calling from Flint, where he was arrested by city police.

Charges have not yet been determined, said Moffit.

The woman was not seriously injured, he said.

- Bryn Mickle

and Elizabeth Shaw

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DETROIT

Kilpatrick spokesman says he'll step down

December 12, 2007

BY ZACHARY GORCHOW

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The embattled spokesman for Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick announced Tuesday that he will step down from his post Dec. 21.

Matt Allen, who pleaded guilty in a domestic violence case involving his wife at their home, said in a statement that as a result of administration restructuring and his desire to minimize distractions related to his return to work, he will be reassigned to the Detroit Cable Commission as the deputy director.

Advertisement

Earlier this month, under a plea deal with the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, Allen, 42, pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges of domestic violence and attempted resisting and obstructing of a police officer. He was sentenced to one year of probation.

The charges stem from an allegedly alcohol-fueled physical confrontation with his wife and Detroit police officers who responded to her 911 calls Nov. 2.

"My wife and I are truly grateful for all the people who have expressed their well wishes and prayers for our healing and future happiness together with our children," Allen said in the statement. "I am most thankful to Mayor Kilpatrick and the entire administration for their support of my family and myself during this personal crisis."

Kilpatrick's deputy press secretary, James Canning, said Allen has returned to work. He said he did not know Kilpatrick's reasons for keeping Allen in city government.

"Matt and the mayor discussed the situation. The decision was made, and we move forward from here," he said.

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SALVATION ARMY LOOKS FOR MORE

Donors help charities fill big demand

December 12, 2007

BY RUBY L. BAILEY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

An uptick in donations is helping local food banks and charitable organizations meet a surge in requests for help with food, bills and Christmas toys from residents who are out of work and low on cash.

Still, area charities say there's always a need for even more donations, now and year-round.

Advertisement

Among groups in immediate need is the Salvation Army's Eastern Michigan Division. It is \$200,000 short of its most recent milestone of \$2.4 million, part of a larger goal to raise \$7.2 million this year.

Volunteers at 300 locations are ringing the bells, but the red kettles aren't as full as in years past. At the same time, requests for assistance are growing.

"It's a two-edged sword," said John Hale, the division's interim director of development. "More people requesting, fewer people giving."

Sheila Winters dug into the bottom of her purse to find a few coins to place in a Salvation Army kettle at Oakland Mall on Monday night. With her husband, Frank Sanders, laid off, extra money is in short supply.

"If I give any more, it'll be me needing some help," said Winters, 36, who was at the mall hoping to land a part-time job. "I just do what I can while I can."

After an impassioned public plea in October, Gleaners Community Food Bank doubled its available food supply to four weeks, said Gerry Brisson, vice president for development. In November, the organization fed 22,000 people, up from 18,000 last November, he said.

Brisson attributes the increased need to the "cumulative effect of having a sluggish economy for a long time."

"People are just running out of ways to scrape by," Brisson said.

Susan Goodell, executive director of Forgotten Harvest, hopes to increase donations as the number of organizations it serves grows. Forgotten Harvest picks up surplus perishable food from restaurants and stores and distributes it to 135 soup kitchens, shelters and pantries for needy people.

Six years ago, the organization worked with just 62 such organizations, and with the increased demand, she said, they are always in need of donations.

"When you're growing your program, it's also helpful to see an increase in funding to support that growth," said Goodell.

Christmas toys and holiday meals are items most requested by callers to the 211 hotline operated by the United Way for Southeastern Michigan. The organization refers callers to assistance available through 7,000 services and programs. All are still providing meals and toys, but "we're certainly creeping up on capacity," said hotline director Bill Sullivan.

The U.S. Marine Corps' Toy for Tots effort to ensure no child is left without a Christmas toy is going well, according to Staff Sgt. Eddie Walker.

The organization had received \$24,000 and 60,000 toys as of Friday in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and St. Clair counties.

Walker said very few people donate recalled toys.

On Saturday, Focus: HOPE plans to deliver food boxes to 400 families, an increase of 100 from last year, and 200 more next week, said Frank Kubik, who manages the food program. The organization provides meals for seniors over 60, pregnant women and families with children over age 6.

And the organization plans to deliver additional food packages and gifts this year to homebound older people. About 35,000 of the 42,000 people receiving food monthly from Focus: HOPE are seniors, Kubik said.

"We're getting a good response," Kubik said of donations. "We're really happy with that."

Contact **RUBY L. BAILEY** at rb Bailey@freepress.com.

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Bellringers touched with local generosity



Mary Fitzpatrick, Perronville, makes a kettle donation Monday at Elmer's Country Market while Jerry Hausmann welcomes donators. Hausmann is a second-year bellringer for the Salvation Army and a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America Central Chapter 345. (Daily Press photo by Jamie Gill)

By Jamie Gill - jgill@dailypress.net

ESCANABA — "People are really getting into the spirit of the holiday season." That's according to Pete Morey, member of the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 345.

Morey and other members of the chapter have been in a good position to witness the parade of holiday cheer. They have been volunteering as bellringers for the local Salvation Army's Kettle Campaign since November. The Salvation Army is currently in the midst of its campaign and has bellringers posted at stores throughout the area.

"Around Thanksgiving people were concentrating more on getting their grocery shopping done," Morey said. "Last Friday, I could really see a difference. People were putting in the kettle \$50 to \$100 bills."

Morey, a native of Escanaba and a graduate of Michigan State University, returned to the area in 2005 after dedicating over 40 years of service in the Army.

"As a bellringer, It has been nice to see some familiar faces," he said. "Escanaba is known for raising intelligent people who have gone off to become successful and/or famous."

Morey is happy to be back in Escanaba, especially during the holidays.

"I have always wanted to return to Escanaba because it's home," he said. "People in this area are so nice, and especially so around this time of year. They give what they can."

Although Morey's last day as a bellringer this season was Monday, bellringers will continue ringing their chimes around town until Dec. 22 to raise funds for the Salvation Army. The amount raised will help cover the Salvation Army's charitable work.

Jerry Hausmann, a bellringer and fellow member of Chapter 345, said, "I can't get over how generous people are. Some people might not have much to give, but they do."

Salvation Army Maj. Bill Cox said the campaign goal this year is to raise \$65,000 at the kettles, and another \$100,000 from mail and drop-off donations.

"This year we are seeing a greater need than last year," Cox said. "People are having to be more selective in how they spend their money. The poor are doing everything they can to stay above water. These are uncertain times for many, with the economy the way it is."

He said kettle donations are down \$5,000 and mail-in donations are down \$3,000 in comparison to this time last year.

Bellringers will be at these locations for anyone wishing to donate: Elmer's County Market, Super One Foods, Shopko, Wal-Mart, Kmart, Walgreen's and the Delta Plaza. For drop-off donations contact Cox at the Salvation Army at 786-0590.

Bellringers started on Nov. 16 and will continue the campaign until Dec. 22.



Achatz brothers deliver warmth to those in need

By Jennifer Sattler
Voice Reporter

Some people will give you the shirt off their back. The Achatz brothers went one step further.

Dave Achatz, 57, and Steve Achatz, 49, challenged communities to gather as many gently used or new coats to fill a bus. The bus, a former MGM Casino Shuttle, barely reaches 58 mph.; but on Thanksgiving Day, it served its purpose.

"Since the mid-80s, my brother and I have been going to the Thanksgiving Day Lions game," Steve Achatz said. "For years, the pre-game festivities have included a Salvation Army coat collection at the main gate. For years, I'd look at my brother and say 'we need to do that' and so we did."

Did they ever. The two collected 675 gently used and new coats at Achatz Catering in Adair and the Achatz Pie Company locations in Armada and Chesterfield Township.

The coats were collected and brought to Achatz Catering for loading before the bus headed to Ford Field.

"It was all his idea; he is the great promoter," Dave Achatz said. "Steve told me as business owners we have an opportunity to help the community."

The bus was bursting at the seams with coats even before the 25 Lions fans got on board for the Thanksgiving Day game.

"We were surrounded by coats with very little room for the passengers. Each person had a tiny spot to sit," Steve Achatz said.

Once at Ford Field, the Salvation Army and its corps of volunteers gave the bus load a red carpet welcome. The streets were blocked enabling the bus driver to motor right up to the main entrance.

"We made an assembly line to unload the coats from our bus to the Salvation Army truck," Steve said.

Their efforts didn't go unnoticed, either. During the game, thousands of Lions fans viewed an instant replay on the stadium's jumbotron. "After the game, we all met back at the bus; and everyone asked me if I saw the coat assembly line on the jumbotron. You know, I missed it," Steve said with a smile.

It's not the first time the Achatz brothers have opened their arms to the needy; this family is well seasoned.

"At a very young age, we were taught to be generous. Our parents were always sending the leftover food from our business to families in need," Steve said.

The coat drive was tailor made.

"After I sold my restaurant, I went to work at Comerica Park," Steve said. "Employees had to park a few miles away and be shuttled to the stadium. In early spring and late fall, there were so many homeless people struggling on the streets. I wanted to reach out to them so they would be warm. In this economy, the need is great all over. The Salvation Army and its agencies provide for others who are needy; this collection had a focus."

Those who gave to the coat drive also received something in return. Steve offered a cup of soup with every donation; Dave offered a free slice of pie.

The largest coat collector, Casco Township Hall, will receive a catered luncheon for their employees. China Township placed second and St. Clair Chevrolet was third. "The Richmond Lions were in great need of 64 coats, which we provided to them from this drive," Steve said.

Success can be sweet, especially when it's shared.

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12/11/2007

CLOTHE-A-CHILD CAMPAIGN

Stacy Langley , The Huron Daily Tribune

Helping area kids have a very merry Christmas was on the minds of dozens of volunteers who gathered at the Bad Axe Free United Methodist Church Monday, and again this morning, for the annual Interfaith Clothe-A-Child campaign.

This morning, volunteers for Clothe-A-Child were working to select brand new Christmas outfits for boys and girls from the group's list of nearly 700 area children in need. The clothes are selected, boxed and then delivered, all by volunteers.

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The season for giving

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

DOES IT SEEM THAT during the Thanksgiving-Christmas-New Year season we see a lot more giving and taking than during the rest of the year?

We're thankful for what we have. We buy tons of stuff, but it's more than we can afford. We covet -- and gladly accept -- the latest gizmo or big ticket. Then we revel in it all until next time around.

It's easy to forget -- or exile from our consciences -- the sick, the poor, the desperate. Too busy, too tired, or too couldn't-be-bothered.

It makes no difference. The hungry, the impoverished, the weak are still with us. Especially in Saginaw County. Especially during this time of year. No, especially during the whole year round.

United Way of Saginaw County helps thousands upon thousands of our friends, neighbors, acquaintances - and strangers -- all year long. There's less than a month left in the charity's fundraising campaign. It's \$600,000 short of its \$2.4 million goal.

You know the need. You've heard the pleas.

Now's the time to help.

You can help

To contribute to United Way, e-mail www.unitedwaysaginaw.org, call 755-0505, or mail to 100 S. Jefferson, Saginaw, MI 48607.

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The most wonderfully excessive time of the year

From Ismael Ahmed, Director
Michigan Department of Human Services
Lansing, Michigan

Note: This op-ed is attributed to Ismael Ahmed and is intended for publication through Dec. 24, 2007. To download a photo of Ismael Ahmed or acquire his bio go to http://www.michigan.gov/dhs/0,1607,7-124-5459_7097---,00.html

This is a magical time of the year as images of snow-covered pines, reindeer with red noses, and chestnuts roasting on an open fire blaze in our memory. As the popular song goes, it's the most wonderful time of year. We celebrate by spending too much money and doing everything we can to ensure our children and loved ones have new memories. The retail and online sales industries depend on our excess as we buy half the toys that are sold all year and buy goods we'd never otherwise consider.

Most of us identify with some of the above scenario. We probably identify less with a different piece of mounting excess – the number of Michigan families in poverty. Today, almost one in five Michigan residents live in or near poverty and almost 30 percent are considered "low income." What does poverty mean in Michigan?

- For 60-year-old Lauralee Daniels from White Lake it means paying \$454 in rent and paying what she can on utilities. She avoids homelessness on \$100 from part-time work and \$187 in food assistance benefits. "You can't live off the government," she said. "Maybe you can subsist but it's not a living."
- For 24-year-old Nicole West of Westland – who lost her job after her father died, didn't qualify for unemployment, and hasn't been able to find work since – it means trying to make ends meet between \$120 a month in child support payments. "My son is sickly and a doctor won't see him without insurance," she said. "I'm accepting handouts. I never had to all my life."
- For self-employed Lansing hair stylist Larry Little, who lost half his business in the last year to the weakening economy, it meant catastrophe when his furnace quit this winter and he struggled to pay a \$300 repair. "No furnace means no clients." He travels by bus because he can't afford to fix his car. "Everything takes longer. A couple appointments eat up the whole day."
- For Sherry Hairston of Detroit, a city with one-third of its residents in poverty, it means no money and no Christmas for her seven children.

Fear, joblessness, homelessness and hunger walk hand-in-hand with poverty. For those who live in poverty, the holidays can be a reminder of what they have lost or never had. They need hope, the kind of hope that comes when committed people take on a task to eliminate the dreadful effects of poverty and the way it shatters lives. What can one person do?

- Consider cutting back on holiday excess and focusing some of your holiday generosity on a charity that helps the poor. Food banks are especially stressed this time of year.
- Speak out! In the 1960s, poverty was considered the most important social issue of our time. Contact your elected officials and tell them you think poverty is a crisis and you want them to tackle that issue with vigor.
- Volunteer your time to a community soup kitchen, a fundraising project at your place of worship, or ringing a bell at the Salvation Army kettle. Your time can be a precious holiday gift.

Doing something about this will help ensure this is, indeed, the most wonderful time of year.